Development of tourism in Northern States

750. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tourism Secretaries from Northern Region have decided to form a Joint Working Group to improve coordination between various States for developing the tourism industry and to formulate credible legal framework;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what steps are taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A Committee of Tourism Secretaries of the States of Northern Region have decided to constitute a Working Group to undertake the following activities jointly for development and promotion of tourism in the Northern Region:

- To bring out a calendar of events.
- To participate in the domestic and international festivals.
- To organise fame tours separately for industry and media.
- To hyperlink websites of State tourism departments with each other and Ministry of Tourism.
- To work out joint packages and market them.
- To train guides and travel industry personnel.

Cracks developed in Charminar, Hyderabad

751. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY:
DR. ABRAR AHMED:
SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that cracks have developed in the Charminar, historic monument of Hyderabad;

(b) if so, the main reasons for this; and

(c) what steps the Archaeological Survey of India is taking to protect the monument?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) The Charminar monument of Hyderabad had developed some minor cracks in the lime plaster and stucco work on the interior and exterior surfaces of the walls due to ageing and vibrations caused by heavy vehicular traffic. The Archaeological Survey of India has taken conservation measures such as grouting, sealing and fixing the affected portions.

There is no major threat to the fabric of the monument at present.

Theft of rare antiques

752. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:
SHRI JIBON ROY:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that CBI unearthed a huge racket involving stealing and selling of priceless antiques from the country's museums and temples;

(b) whether a well-organised syndicate of antique smugglers are behind the racket;

(c) whether any arrests have been made so far; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take for the safety and preservation of these rare antique items which date back to the first century A.D.?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) As per the information given by the Central Bureau of Investigation during the last three years, they have registered three cases of theft of antiquities from temples and two cases of sale of antiquities by dealers who did not have any licence from the Archaeological Survey of India.

The CBI has also recently intercepted a consignment at the Export Unit of the IGI Airport, New Delhi and recovered sixteen antiquities, and